When does human nature crash under the strain of fear and tragedy? Must it pull down all loved ones in disas-

THE BREAKING POINT

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

Author of "Dangerous Days," "K," "The Amazing Interlude," and many other successful novels. Copyright, 1922, Mary Roberts Rinehart; published by arrangement with McClure's.

Can evil identity be lost in good? See how this throbbing story of my a tery, regeneration and love solves these problems.

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

DR. DAVID LIVINGSTONE, chief physician in Haveriu, a small town, genial but bluff, for shorts a secret concerning identity of their believed nephew with

LUCY, his sister, beloved by everybody in town.

LUCY. his sister, beloved by everybody in town.

DR. DICK LIVINGSTONE, in whose memory there is a gap, and who is determined some day to go back to Norada, his childhood home, in order to bridge the gap, he is full of vitality and is bouled looking and acting in spite of his thirty years and professional career. He is in love with ELIZABETH WHEELER, a wholesome girl, who loves him very sincerely.

BEVERLY CARLYSLE, actress, who, ten years before, was missed up in a curious story. Her husband, Lucas, had been shot to death, as was generally believed, by a certain jud Clark, a rich young man about sown. Clark had disappeared immediately and it was believed he perished in a bilezard.

PRED GREGORY. Beverly's brother and mayager. whose researches line him up NINA. Elizabeth's sister, an extravadan LESLIE WARD, Elizabeth's brother-in-law. MR. AND MRS. WHEELER. typical Ameri-WALLIE SAYRE, a rich youth whose so cially select mother wishes him to marri Elizabeth, with whom he is smitten.

BASSETT'S last scruple had fled. was almost suspicious of his luck. And that conviction, that things were

she showed no curiosity as to the reason | head-which shows how strange for his question.

"Henry Livingstone!" she said. "Henry Livingstone!" she said.
"Well, I should say so. I went out right away when we got the word, he was dead, and there I stayed until it was all over. I guess I know as much directly, anyhow."
"Elizabeth." he said gravely, "I've been a self-centered fool. I stayed away because I've been in trouble. I'm still in trouble, for that matter. But it hasn't anything to do with you. Not about him as any one around here does, for I had to go over his papers to find out who his people were."

out who his people were."

The papers, it seemed, had not been very interesting; canceled checks and receipted bills, and a large bundle of letters, all of them from a brother named David and a sister who signed herself Lucy. There had been a sealed one, too, addressed to David Livingstone, and to be opened after his death. She had had her husband wire to She had had her husband wire to "David" and he had come out, too late for the funeral.

'Do you remember when that was?" "Let me see. Henry Livingstone died about a month before the murder on the Clark ranch. We date most things around here from that time."
"How long did 'David' stay?" Bassett had tried to keep his tone carefully conversational, but he saw that it was

clined.

"It's an interesting story." he said.

"I didn't tell your husband, for I wasn't sure I was on the right trail. But the David and Lucy business climinates this man. There's a piece of property waiting in the East for a Henry Livingstone who came to this State in the 80's, or for his heirs. You can say positively that this man was not married?"

"No. He didn't like women. Never had one on the place. Two ranch hands that are still at the Wassons', and himbard.

No housekeeper then, and no somborn out of wedlock, so far as any evidence went. All that glib lying in the doctor's office, all that apparent openness and frankness, gone by the board! The man in the cabin, reported by Maggie Donaldson, had been David Livingstone. Somehow, some way, he had got Judson Clark out of the country and spirited him East. Not that the how mattered just yet. The essential fact was there, that David Livingstone had but the failure to cover the trail, the ease with which he had picked it up,

He rose and threw away his eigar. "You say this David went East, when he had sold out the place. Do you remember where he lived?" Some town in Eastern Pennsyl-

vania. I've forgotten the name."
"I've got to be sure I'm wrong, and then go ahead," he said, as he got his "I'll see those men at the ranch. guess, and then be on my way. How

It was about ten miles, along a bad road which kept him too much occu-pled for any connected thought. But his sense of exultation persisted. He had found Judson Clark.

Dick's decision to cut himself off The new hu from Elizabeth was born of his certain for Elizabeth. had to offer her. But he was very un-happy. He worked sturdily all day and his face was so sore that he had and slept at night out of sheer fatigue, only to rouse in the early morning to a conviction of something wrong be fore he was fully awake. Then would come the uncertainty and pain of full consciousness, and he would lie with his arms under his head, gazing un-blished. linkingly at the ceiling and prepar

ing to face another day.

There was no prospect of early relef, although David had not again referred to his going away. David was very feeble. The look of him sometimes of the look of him sometimes of the look of him sometimes. times sent an almost physical pain through Dick's heart. But there were ilmes when he roused to something like his old spirit, shouted for tobacco, frowned over his diet tray, and fought Harrison Miller when he came in to play cribbage in much his old tumultu-

ous manner. Then, one afternoon late in May, when for four days Dick had not seen Elizabeth, suddenly he found the deelsion as to their relation taken out of his hands, and by Elizabeth her-

He opened the door one afternoon to find her sitting alone in the waiting

room, clearly very frightened and almost inarticulate. He could not speak at all at first, and when he did his voice, to his dismay, was distinctly husky.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked, in a tone which was faidle anything.

tone which was fairly sepulchral.

That's what I want to know, Suddenly he found himself violently angry. Not at her, of course. At

everything.
"Wrong?" he said, savagely. "Yes. Everything is wrong!"
Then he was angry! She went rather

What have I done, Dick?" As suddenly as he had been flerce he

"I want you to know this. Dick." she said. "that nothing, no gossip or anything, can make any differ-

gathering. So ready, indeed, that he was abject and ashamed. Startled,

"You?" he said. "What have you coming too easy, persisted through his right in a wrong world. You interview with the storekeeper's wife in the small house behind the store. She was a talkative woman, eager to discuss the one drama in a drab life, and the showed no curiosity as to the reason head, which shows how strange the

English language is. "Elizabeth." he said gravely, "I've

"Don't you think it's possible that I know what it is?" "You do know."

"There is always gossip," she said, "and the only thing one can do is to forget it at once. You ought to be too big for that sort of thing."

"But-suppose it is true?"
"What difference would it make?" He made a quick movement toward

"There may be more than that. don't know, Elizabeth," he said, his eyes on hers. "I have always thought —I can't go to David now."

conversational, but he saw that it was not necessary. She was glad of a chance to talk.

"Well, I'd say about three or four weeks. He hadn't seen his brother for years, and I guess there was no love lost. He sold everything as quick as he could and went back East." She glanced at the clock. "My husband will be in soon for dinner. I'd be glad to have you stay and take a meal with us."

The reporter thanked her and declined.

"It's an interesting story." he said.

that are still at the Wassons', and him-self, that was all. The Wassons are the folks who bought the ranch."

hogany chair.

"You've all I've got," he said. "The one real thing in a world that's going

The same mood of accepting what he had without question and of refusing to look ahead actuated him for the next few days. He was incredibly happy. He went about his work with his customary care and thoroughness, for long practice had made it possible for him to go on as though nothing had happened, to listen to querulous complaints and long lists of symptoms and to write without error there exceeds was there, that David Livingstone had been in this part of the country at the time Maggie Donaldson had been nursing Judson Clark in the mountains.

Bassett sat back and chewed the end of his cigar thoughtfully. The sheer boldness of the scheme which had saved Judson Clark compelled his admiration, but the failure to cover the trail, the daily and nightly work, and put up a very fair imitation of Dr. Richard Liv-

ingstone. But hidden away was a heart that behaved in a highly unprofessional manner, and sang and dreamed and jumped at the sight of a certain small figure on the street, and generally played hob with systole and diastole and the vagus and accelerator nerves. Which are all any doctor really knows about the heart until he falls in love.

He even began to wonder if he had read into the situation something that was not there, and in this his consciousness of David's essential rectitude belped him. David could not do a wrong thing or an unworthy one. He wished he were more like David. The new humility extended to his love

ty that he could not see her and keep his head. He was resolutely determined before the bathroom mirror, he wonto keep his head until he knew what he dered what she could see in him to care

to put cream on it at night, to his se-cret humiliation. When he was dressed







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in the morning he found himself once or twice taking a final survey of the cusemble, and at those times he wished very carnestly that he had some out-or formented the nurse with high-spirstanding conditions.

cor twice taking a final survey of the ensemble, and at those times he wished very earnestly that he had some outstanding quality of appearance that she might admire.

He refused to think. He was content for a time simply to feel, to be supermely happy, to live each day as it came and not to look ahead. And the old house semed to brighten with him. Never had Lucy's window boxes been so bright, or Minnie's bread so light; the sun peured into David's sick room and turned the nurse so dazzling white in her uniform that David declared he was suffering from snow-blindness.

And David himself was improving rapidly. With the passage of each day he felt more secure. The reporter from the Times-Republican—if he were really on the trail of Dick he would have come to see him, and would have told him the story. No. That bridge was safely crossed. And Dick was happy. David, lying in his bed, would listen and smile

The house or leaped up the stairs two at a time; when he sang in his shower, or tormented the nurse with high-spir ited nonsense. The boy was very happy. He would marry Elizabeth Wheeler, and things would be as they should be; there would be the fullness of life, young volces, in the house, toys on the lawn. He himself would pass on, in the fullness of time; but Dick

On Decoration Day they got him out of bed, making a great ceremony of it, and when he was settled by the window in his big chair with a blanket over his knees, Dick came in with a great box. Unwrapping it he disclosed a mass of paper and a small box, and within that still another.

What fol-de-rol is all this?' David demanded fiercely, with a childish look of expectation in his eyes. "Give me that box. Some more slippers, probably!"

To be continued tomorrow

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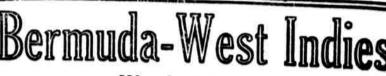
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